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ABSTRACT

The experiences of three college deans who conducted field-based inservice courses are recounted. Courses were conducted in the needs of exceptional children, multicultural education, community responsibility for change, and supervisory skills. General descriptions of course content and reactions of participants are interspersed with introspective reflections on ways to improve services offered by colleges of education to sites removed from the campus. (JD)

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DEANS AS TEACHERS IN THE FIELD

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DEANS AS TEACHERS IN THE FIELD

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In a rural town located in a remote area of lakes and wilderness an extraordinary event occurred in the life of the local school district's Teacher Corps project. Traveling winding country roads for distances of more than one hundred miles, three state university faculty members delivered site specific field based courses designed to address the learning needs of school staff and community members. This situation may not seem unusual for faculty who have been involved in rural Teacher Corps projects but when the three faculty members are deans, it has to be considered unique. Involving university faculty in the delivery of field based inservice courses is not always an easy task. To draw from the same university system three deans--individuals who carry administrative responsibilities--to commit themselves to traveling long distances and teach at unusual hours in a small, isolated town is an event which warrants some attention and analysis.

What was learned from the deans' involvement? To answer that question I interviewed the deans, the teachers and members of the community with whom they had interacted. This is a factual account of their involvement and the lessons they learned. To protect the innocent, I shall identify the deans as Brown, Smith, and Jones, the community as Piper's Crossing, and the university as Land Grant University. Any connection between persons, towns, and institutions, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Hunting, fishing, and skiing attract small groups of enthusiasts to Piper's Crossing. The resort business--a few lodges and houses in the woods, a small inn and motel in town, and a state owned ski resort--is seasonal,

mostly locally owned, and not highly developed. Much of the landscape around Piper's Crossing is owned by paper companies. A few of the town's 1900 residents work in small businesses, but most work in the woods or woods-related industries. No large, private employer is located within the confines of the school district and Piper's Crossing unemployment rate is about 15 percent. When personal income is not insecure, it is often fixed. At least one third of Piper's Crossing residents are older and retired. Another third are children and 22 percent of the school age population are eligible for Title I. Health services, including counseling, are notably scarce and educational opportunities are limited. Career related postsecondary opportunities are not easy to come by. The nearest college in the system is 95 miles away.

Teacher Corps entered Piper's Crossing in the summer of 1977 for the purpose of developing and implementing inservice programs and activities in a collaborative needs responsive manner through the linkage of Land Grant University resources with the community of Piper's Crossing. Piper's Crossing was selected as the site for a Teacher Corps project because of its distance from the university (to see if the university could deliver programs to remote areas) and because the district's schools are located in one site. Incentives for university system involvement included the challenge of determining whether it could deliver programs to remote areas, indirect monies, and support for delivery of a graduate program through Land Grant University. The goals of the Teacher Corps project were: (1) to provide on-site, needs responsive, inservice programs for Piper's Crossing faculty; (2) to provide an opportunity for interested faculty to work on a master's degree in teaching

without attending the university for a major portion of their degree credit; (3) to provide a site for the preservice preparation of four teacher interns; (4) to implement a program of community education and development; and (5) to facilitate increased interaction between the school and the community for collaborative decision making regarding school problem solving and inservice/ preservice teacher education.

It seems that a combination of chance, circumstances, and personal interest brought the deans of the Land Grant University System to the Teacher Corps project in Piper's Crossing in 1977-78. In the case of Dean Brown, who was active in the Teacher Corps project from the beginning through serving on the project's Steering Committee, there was a need for someone to teach a course in the area of exceptionality. The only faculty member qualified and willing to teach a course on the physically handicapped was Dean Brown. Later Brown taught a non-credit course on multicultural education, a topic which Brown had spent considerable time studying. Indeed for a period of several months while on leave from Land Grant University, Dean Brown lived on an Indian reservation to become totally immersed in an Indian culture. What were Dean Brown's recollections of teaching field based inservice courses? What was learned from personal involvement in teaching on site? Brown had this to say. "There was not much difference in the way this course (Physical Handicaps) was taught and an undergraduate course is taught because there is not much difference between undergraduate and graduate programs in exceptionality. Most master's degree programs are transitional and reflect in depth undergraduate degree work. I taught the course as an introductory course--essentially giving information. There is a real need for information.

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Teachers need to know about handicaps and the reality of handicapping conditions as a basis for beginning to address the needs of exceptional children in their classrooms and schools."

The multicultural course Brown taught was a non-credit seminar offered to teachers and members of the community. The course was designed to generate analysis and discussion around some provocative questions. What is social class? What is the socioeconomic structure of Piper's Crossing? What are the subcultures of Piper's Crossing? Where do Piper's Crossing kids go when they graduate from high school? How do we prepare them to live in the multicultural world at large? What's happening to the American family? What's happening to families in Piper's Crossing? Who are the community's and state's invisible minorities? How can schools tap the cultural resources of minority groups to enrich learning for kids? Dean Brown raised these questions to promote discussion and initiate consciousness raising. "Questions and consciousness raising around multicultural and equity issues in education tend to polarize discussion because the nature of the content and the questions compels you to deal with fundamental value positions which lay at the heart of education and these are the issues we tend to avoid examining," Brown observed.

What were the reactions to Dean Brown's courses? Participants in the exceptionality course thought the information on handicapping conditions was useful but expressed some concerns about the content of the course not being site specific. They had stronger more positive reactions to the multicultural course. Some disagreed vehemently about the concept of social class structure particularly its application to Piper's Crossing. The question of who runs the schools caused similar reactions. People spoke up freely and all evaluated the course as a significant consciousness raising experience which lives on with them now.

Brown took the opportunity to teach these field based courses because he thought that as the dean of a School of Education he could and ought to provide leadership for his faculty on inservice education by modeling field based instruction. He wanted to demonstrate that such action was a priority for the School. He had often spoken with faculty about the need for a reconceptualization of the role of the university and its faculty in teacher education. What better chance was there to show that action speaks louder than words? Dean Brown's personal learnings from his involvement in the Piper's Crossing Teacher Corps project included interesting observations on the nature of inservice education and the involvement of university faculty. Dean Brown distinguishes between inservice education and graduate education. "Much of inservice education should be idiosyncratic and job embedded. What works for one teacher may not work for another. A particular approach may work because of the energy, drive, motivation, and perseverance of an individual teacher. The same approach may not fit the personal style or may not be carried off with as much vigor and interest with another teacher. Inservice teachers want answers and concrete ideas now. They don't want to "put up" with abstract theoretical approaches. They are no different than dentists and doctors and other professionals who take a workshop or course to update their skills. Universities and the teaching profession need to legitimate the educational value of workshops and the individual consultation process by developing wider acceptance and recognition of Continuing Education Units and move away from the credit box or trap."

Many university faculty are theoretically, philosophically, and/or research oriented and are not attuned to the "nuts and bolts" real problems faced by the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers ought to be enlisted to teach inservice courses to each other. University faculty have a role to

play in inservice education and that is to stimulate consciousness raising, to cause teachers to reflect on and rethink what they are doing, and to examine their practice. The specific concrete approaches designed to address individual classroom problems may be best handled by other classroom teachers who live in the dailiness of the classroom world.

Dean Brown was disappointed in the off-campus, inservice graduate degree program delivered at Piper's Crossing by Land Grant University. "The program was designed to fulfill university fantasies--it wasn't designed to meet local needs. It was designed to give people a degree for salary purposes and seemed to have little relevance to the life of a classroom teacher. The traditional model of teacher education prevailed." Based on his analysis of the Piper's Crossing Teacher Corps project, Dean Brown strongly believes that program change and institutionalization can only occur when a university and local district plan an inservice program together from the beginning. To bring about change and institutionalize innovation in teacher education, university and public school faculties have to buy into the change process when a project or program is being formulated. It may be "clicheish" but without initial ownership of the change effort, the chances of implementing and institutionalizing innovation at either the university or public school level range from dim to nonexistent. There is a risk to securing this kind of involvement from the beginning. Many good ideas for change, many good imaginative program proposals have been killed in the idea formation stage by the collective conservatism and "group think" phenomenon which seems to emerge all too frequently whenever academic groups get together. But change and the institutionalization of change will not be accomplished by academic buccaneers. University and school faculties must participate in the planning process and collaborate in the development of proposals for change from the start.

It is imperative that all parties in a field based program interfacing the university, school, and community be brought together initially to learn how to collaborate. This is seldom done. We gratuitiously assume collaboration will happen if we cause people to meet with each other and plan programs together as members of planning task forces or committees. It is very important to have people focus in right away on what collaboration is and what it requires. People need to be taught how to collaborate and deal with significant questions about the process. What is collaboration? What does it involve? What does it cost? What are its risks? What are its benefits? Am I ready to pay the costs and give up something to get the benefits which accrue from collaboration? How do we help each other in the process? What are the ground rules for making decisions? Collaboration is a dialectical and dialogical process with alot of give and take and its successful achievement requires that the university, the local school district, and the community learn how to build trust, communicate, and solve problems together from the beginning. People need to prepare themselves for dealing with the conflicts which naturally emanate from the interface of the different norms, regularities, and values of the university, the school district, and the community. Collaboration is not learned naturally. It is a sophisticated process which must be taught and learned deliberately.

Another critical element required to accomplish program change and institutionalization is careful planning. Dean Brown warns that one should never assume anything. Effective planning is a slow, step by step, tedious process and demands great patience. Planning must be conscientious and long range; short range, and intermediate goals and objectives need to be spelled out. Put everything into writing including expectations. Tell who does what,

when, where, and with what materials. Define who is accountable for what and who has the power to make key decisions. Monitor your planning process and modify your plans when necessary, but stick with a basic plan. Sustained collaboration, planning, follow up, and perseverance are the keys to change and institutionalization.

Institutionalization of change concerned Dean Smith who taught two workshops on community education in Piper's Crossing. He wanted to find out what works and what doesn't work when community development workshops are offered to teach parents how public schools and universities are run, how local, county and state political structures work and spend money, how community people can affect these organization's decisions, and how community problems can be identified and attacked with local, county, state, and federal resources. Dean Smith's consistent message throughout his workshop was--"You, the members of this community, can define and solve your problems, you have the resources, you can learn from each other, through collaboration with each other you have collective power, collective talent, and collective expertise to address the major issues confronting Piper's Crossing." It was a process of empowerment--a giving away of expertise, a demystification of organizational development skills. Dean Smith is well steeped in organizational development and it is a natural part of his personal style in working with people to use a problem solving consultation approach. He listens well and maintains an informal and open invitational attitude which quickly reduces any social distance between himself and people with whom he works. His workshops were well received and were perceived as having positive, concrete impact on the workshop participants.

Dean Smith sees the university playing a vital role in community development and education through providing on line problem solving consultation services to help citizens identify their problems and learn how to use their resources. "Eighty percent of continuing education is informal, twenty percent is formal but that twenty percent is a quality factor which is needed and which requires the involvement of the university as an external authority. The university needs to view the educational component in a local problem solving effort as a form of applied research and to help community people see education in the same way. See what citizens can do with their own resources and when they identify a gap between what they are doing and what they want to do, provide consultation, help local people think things through, but then have these same citizens go back and solve their own problems." Dean Smith also suggested that universities could make a significant contribution to community development by working with a variety of community groups in developing self-teaching materials on organizational and community development and using interactive television to provide on line consultation to isolated communities.

He had definite ideas about impacting universities and securing their involvement in field based inservice education programs, particularly Teacher Corps projects. "Find the developers on campus and get them involved early and frequently. Find the people with the developmental entrepreneurial skills, the risk takers, go one on one with them, get them in and keep them in the project. Look beyond School of Education faculty. There are bound to be natural change agents in any education faculty but don't overlook faculty and administrators in other sectors of the university. Every university has people who have traveled the same side of the street as classroom

teachers, parents, and community members. Working with them and securing their participation in the project at the beginning is a good way to increase the chances of change and institutionalization. Institutionalization won't come from the top down. You approach universitites the same way as other organizations. Grass roots ownership of change is the sine qua non for changing anything and grass roots movements begin with the self-starters, the go getters."

Helping university faculty recognize that their personal, vested interests can be served by their active participation in field based inservice education is an effective entry for their engagement. Dean Smith believes that the collaborative action research possibilities in field based teacher education are endless. The irony of the situation is that often university faculty who ostensibly have been trained to conduct research do not know how to carry out field based research--"They cannot do what they ought to do." Rather than viewing on site teaching and consultation as inconsistent with their career development, faculty should see there is much to gain personally from working with schools and communities in researching the problems created by declining enrollments, in researching the staff development process, in researching the problems of accountability, collaboration, mainstreaming, and teacher burnout. The opportunities for research in the field, particularly in relation to staff development, are limited only by the imagination. "We may have to begin with staff development for the staff developers so that university faculty can do what is often claimed they do better than anyone else--conduct research."

"Try to marry preservice and inservice education with research," suggested Dean Jones who taught a course on supervision in Piper's Crossing.

His commitment to teach on site was motivated because he wanted to test the "demons" of off campus work. Was the university faculty right about the difficulties inherent in off campus work? Was off campus work so terrible in terms of travel, emotional, and time demands? Could you really deliver a course on supervision at a local site--a course which has a potent emotional loading, particularly when the supervisor and "supervisees" are scrutinizing local supervision practices together?

Reflecting on his teaching assignment with Teacher Corps, Dean Jones shared a variety of personal learnings and observations. Looking back he felt good about his teaching assignment and although at times he found the three and a half hour drive to Piper's Crossing long, it gave him time to think about his course, the people in it, and how he could provide the best learning experience for them. He noted that when you teach an off campus course, you have to be loose--you cannot be rigid about time and space. The supervision course was consistently moved about and Jones taught one evening in the living room of a teacher's house, another in the cafeteria in the high school, another in the dining room of one of the local inns, and a few evenings in a classroom in the elementary school. "A university faculty member teaching off campus has to be flexible, has to be willing to be interrupted, and accept the fact that you have to haul stuff long distances, duplicate handouts, and manufacture your own instructional materials," said Dean Jones. He went on to indicate that an off campus instructor has to work twice as hard in teaching a field based course vis a vis a campus based course. It requires fifty hours of instructional time to teach a thirty-five hour "campus" course in the field because the instructor has to accommodate legitimate demands and adapt to idiosyncratic professional styles which

exist in a specific school setting. Because of professional demands on the time of some teachers, Dean Jones met with some individuals at 6:00 AM and others at 10:00 PM. In field based courses there are many pressures by teachers to co-opt the instructor to do less, to meet less frequently, to water down instruction, to teach a course based primarily on convenience. The balance between being sensitive to the real needs of teachers and standards of quality is tricky. If instructors water down a course and respond to the informal atmosphere which often characterizes site specific courses by lowering expectations, then teachers will complain (and properly so) that the course is too easy and lose respect for the instructor. Given the nature of the participants, pressures on their time, local conditions, and the informal ambience, field based courses demand more individualization, more planning, more flexibility, and more time on the part of the professor, especially if he or she cares and is committed to teaching a high quality course which relates to the real world of the classroom teacher. Dean Jones did not change his expectations or lower his standards. He individualized and broke his class into small groups and met with individual teachers at times convenient for them. Everyone taking the course submitted weekly papers and Jones would respond to each of these papers with detailed, written responses which sometimes were longer than the papers submitted. He encouraged teachers to write, to publish for their peers, because he believes that writing compels reflection, disciplined thought, and offers an effective medium for teachers to get their thoughts out. His detailed feedback was a means for individualizing, for demonstrating that writing clarifies and extends ideas and for showing that the instructor practiced what he preached. Professors who teach in the field need to develop a sensitivity to the dynamics and context of the school site.

The personal dynamics, the conflicts and relationships which go on during each day of the school year don't stop when an off campus class session begins. Jones recommends that instructors arrive at the school well before their classes begin to get a sense of the norms, values, and dynamics operating among the staff taking the course. In any given school site in-service class you may find husband-wife teams, supervisor-supervisees, friends-enemies, all who bring the attitudinal, emotional, and value agenda of their daily school and personal lives into the course. A good instructor will work hard to develop a sensitivity to these interpersonal relationships and the organizational context and climate of the school because they affect people's attitudes and influence their receptivity to and assimilation of course material. "Because you are teaching on their turf, teachers are not intimidated as they might be in a university classroom--nor do they close off their school day." This means that a professor teaching a site specific course must be prepared to put in considerable time needs sensing, planning, individualizing, and assessing school contexts and dynamics that affect instruction. Dean Jones believes that because of the heavy time requirement and work load necessary to teach a high quality field based course, one field based inservice course is the equivalent of two campus based courses and that universities have to recognize and accommodate this kind of differential in work load for faculty involved in inservice education. "Of course the same kind of preparation which goes into teaching a quality field based course should happen with on campus courses, but doesn't." Jones would schedule faculty every other semester to teach field based inservice courses so that faculty would be involved in a cycle of field based instructional action followed by a period of campus based reflection.

Dean Jones advised off campus instructors to try to make each class a place where it is safe to make challenging statements, to be open, and to try out new behaviors. In teaching the course on supervision, Jones found himself in a delicate situation. The more people began to examine the supervisory process and to compare their current supervisory procedures with ideal procedures, the more tension grew between supervisors and supervisees. He tried to open up the covert conflicts for use as real data in studying the process of supervision. Using a role playing situation which simulated a conference between an elementary supervisor and a classroom teacher, he inadvertently exacerbated the tension and dissonance. "I didn't know the social context as well as I should have. The time period in which the course was offered was collapsed and too concentrated, but I recovered instructional mistakes on a person to person basis through the weekly writings and feedback. One significant outcome from the course was that everyone learned that teachers are not really afraid of supervision--they want supervision--good supervision that helps them grow--what they don't want and what often intimidates them is the unprofessional, authoritarian checklist with twice a year visitations which in their eyes is a lot of crap."

Equally strong feelings were expressed by Dean Jones about inservice education and change. "The university has a public responsibility for system and programmatic development in schools and inservice education has to be viewed from a programmatic viewpoint. This means that personal and individual professional development should be the concern of universities and public schools only in so far as they are tied in with the improvement

of the schools. Universities should hold the line on inservice education. They cannot be all things to all people putting out every little educational brush fire that pops up here and there. Universities', public schools' and teachers' organizations must make commitments to each other as total systems. System commitment is needed to legitimatize inservice education and really make it work in terms of eventually having a pay off for teachers and ultimately for the kids. There is a difference between staff development and professional development. It is the duty of every university faculty member and classroom teacher to keep up to date, to read, to think, to share ideas. It is the responsibility of universities and school systems to improve the educational climate and the school as an organizational unit. Where there is congruence between professional development and the overall improvement of the school and its climate that's staff development. When a request for an inservice workshop comes into a university from a school system, the university should secure a commitment from the school system for follow up work and for some form of sustained involvement. Refuse to send a course or workshop out to the field on a sporadic basis. Three day workshops--"dog and pony shows"--have negligible impact on schools. Unless there is an opportunity for a long term, systematic relationship, then the university or the school system should decline to participate on ethical grounds. Inservice education without system commitment is a sham.

Long term systematic approaches to inservice education offer university faculty and classroom teachers the time and place to exploit natural problem situations for action research. Begin with problems confronting teachers in the classroom and help them to become researchers to solve their own problems. Work with them, formulate hypotheses, test them out in the

classroom, and write them up. Everyone should publish. Create your own in-house journal--mimeograph papers-circulate them among faculty colleagues, teachers, and parents in the community. Function as teams of inquirers and problem solvers. Bring preservice and inservice teachers and university faculty together as research teams. Encourage them to investigate problems regarding individualization, mainstreaming, classroom management, reading, creativity. Isn't it absurd that preservice students will be writing papers, inservice teachers will be writing papers or preparing projects for a course or workshop, and university faculty will be writing manuscripts-all in isolation from each other. What excitement there would be and what quality action research would result if we could assemble these people, create research teams, identify real problems, and have these teams do some real blood and guts problem solving. We would break down the fragmented approach to teacher education, integrate preservice and inservice education, and produce usable knowledge."

One final recommendation Dean Jones had for Teacher Corps projects was to develop mechanisms for moving teachers and university faculty out of their classrooms into nonschool, nonuniversity settings and conferences. Preservice students, inservice teachers, and university faculty need at least to change their roles every now and then within the context of education, but it would help everyone to put their work into proper perspective and upgrade their thinking if they had some experiences, however brief, outside of education.

Moving out of their administrative offices and into Piper's Crossing gave the deans an opportunity to test out their notions about inservice education, to see what it is like to teach in a small community far removed

from the nearest state university campus, to have their thinking "scratched and nicked" by the reality of the community and its schools. Community residents and teachers had positive reactions to their presence in Piper's Crossing:

> "It was real good for the deans to come out--couldn't help but have a positive impact on the university regarding teacher needs."
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> "When they first came out, there were some social barriers between us but they melted away. One of the deans took a lot of heavy criticism and he made some modifications in the way he taught his course but he never compromised his integrity and standards, he was determined, and he won our respect."
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> "There was a lot of give and take. The deans learned and we learned."
>
> "One thing that impressed me was that these guys were pretty down to earth--they knew what they were about."
>
> "There was a lot of informal contact and a lot of individualization and consulting with teachers. I think they (deans) got some valuable ideas for teacher education. I hope they can put them into practice."
>
> "They were good examples for their faculties."

Many lessons were learned by the teachers, community residents, and the three deans in their give and take with each other. The deans risked themselves and put themselves on the line. In so doing they became vulnerable and their vulnerability continues long after the project has terminated. They now face their own test of their leadership--translating their lessons learned into change actions which will reshape and lead to a reconceptualization of teacher education for its changing constituencies.